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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 004951

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/UMB AND EUR/ERA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2009

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#) [EUN](#) [USEU](#) [BRUSSELS](#)

SUBJECT: EU ON BELARUS PARTICIPATION AT CEI SUMMIT

REF: SECSTATE 244290

Classified By: USEU POLOFF LEE LITZENBERGER REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

1. (C) We presented reftel demarche to Commission and Council officials on 17 November, asking their support in pressing the Government of Slovenia to rescind its invitation of a senior Belarus government official to the November 24-26 Central European Initiative (CEI) Summit hosted by Slovenia. The EU is unlikely to put additional pressure on the Slovenes. The Council explained that it approached Slovenia two months ago with a concern that Lukashenko might attend, and urged the Slovenes to keep attendance below the level of Prime Minister. Slovenia therefore acted according to the EU guidance it had received.

2. (C) The Commission noted that Slovenia's position was in line with EU policy to limit bilateral contacts, but not multilateral contacts. Additionally, according to the Council Belarus desk, a potential EU visa ban on the minister in question would not apply to the CEI summit because it is a multilateral event. Under the EU's policy, the Slovenes may not bilaterally meet with the Belarussian minister on the margins of the conference. In response to our point about Greece and the EU's successful exclusion of Sports minister Sivakov from the Olympics, our Commission contact replied that this exclusion was based on Sivakov's direct implication in disappearances as related in the COE's Pourgerides report.

3. (C) We pressed for the EU to reconsider its policy on multilateral events or, at least, consider making an exception to its policy at this event to send strong signals of disapproval and honor the spirit of the EU's "selective engagement" policy toward Belarus. We argued that inviting a Belarussian official at the ministerial level shortly after the elections and referendum on the elimination of term limits on the presidency, which fell significantly short of the OSCE's standards for democratic elections, could undermine the EU effort to publicly support democracy and human rights in Belarus. The Commission official argued that the EU is unlikely to expand its "selective engagement" policy to multilateral events because EU Member States that neighbor Belarus, such as Poland and Lithuania, maintain they must have a means of engaging Belarus.

4. (C) The EU is meeting next Monday to prepare Conclusions on Belarus for the EU Foreign Ministers' GAERC on November 22-23. They are preparing to impose visa bans on officials responsible for electoral fraud and violation of human rights of demonstrators, but do not have a list of names. The Council asked if we had a list of names we were considering, which we could share so we act on the same individuals. We encouraged the EU to include consideration of the CEI issue in Monday's discussion. However, it appears extremely unlikely the EU will approach Slovenia on this issue.

McKinley